Learning Without Borders

An Introduction to Community-Based Adult Literacy in British Columbia

Promoting and supporting literacy and learning since 1990

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Acronyms

ABE	Adult Basic Education
ALMD	Ministry of Advanced Education and Labour Market Development
AVED	Ministry of Advanced Education
CALP	Community Adult Literacy Program
CCL	Canadian Council on Learning
DLP	District Literacy Plan
ESLSAP	English as a Second Language Settlement Assistance Program
IALSS	International Adult Literacy & Skills Survey
MEd	Ministry of Education
NALD	National Adult Literacy Database
OLES	Office of Literacy and Essential Skills
RLC	Regional Literacy Coordinator

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Literacy BC
601-510 West Hastings Street
Vancouver, BC V6B 1L8
Canada
www.literacybc.ca

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Introduction

"Use us to help make a difference, but teach us how to do it."

Learner at the 2007 Summer Literacy Institute

Demystifying adult literacy

Welcome to the world of community-based adult literacy. We are at an interesting stage in British Columbia. Unprecedented numbers of communities are mobilizing to work together to raise literacy levels. With this increased interest, we are also seeing more people around the table looking for solutions – people who may not yet be familiar with the issues and challenges.

Learning Without Borders has been designed to help you navigate the complexities of the adult literacy field in BC. We survey its history, explain some of the challenges, provide a glimpse of the delivery models and introduce the perspective of adult learners. We also supply a brief summary of several research reports that are valuable for a full understanding of adult literacy today.

We want to provide a broad picture, a starting place of sorts. And because you are busy, we have kept it short while also providing links for further reading. We are sure you will find it useful.

"I noticed that things will stay the same until you make a change in your life. At first I was really scared to ask for help, but I did it!"

Learner from the Canucks Family Education Centre

Literacy means communication for participation. Happily, relatively few British Columbian adults have no literacy skills whatsoever. However, literacy is not about whether one can read, but how well one reads. It encompasses the basic skills people need to achieve their goals, to function and thrive in the modern economy, and to develop their knowledge and potential – the ability to understand and employ printed information in daily activities, at home, at work and in the community.

"I discovered I knew more than I thought I did."

Learner at the 2007 Summer Literacy Institute

Literacy is the essential skill. It is the cornerstone of human capital development – the foundational competence upon which the acquisition of other skills depends. Many British Columbian adults – as many as one million – have weaker literacy skills than they need to fully participate and succeed. Supporting them in improving their literacy skills is critical to their social and economic well-being and for an inclusive, prosperous province.

"I wasn't keen on the idea of going 'back to school', but [my program] sounded different – designed for adults, to meet their needs and interests. The first step through that door was the hardest I ever took. Now, I am about to complete my Grade 12. People said I could never do it, and I'm proving them wrong."

Williams Lake Partners in Learning participant

History

1970s

Early 1970's. Federal investment in adult basic education through Manpower Training Programs. Eventually withdrawn on grounds that people were staying in upgrading programs instead of proceeding to employment.

1976. Report of the BC Committee on Continuing and Community Education. Adult Basic Education is a 'high priority special program'. BC a leader in Canada in terms of the development of ABE, made possible by Ministry of Education (MEd) resources. Many projects become part of the community college programs – some still exist today.

1980s

1986. Ministry of Advanced Education (AVED) created, responsible for the education of all adults except those enrolled in the secondary school system.

1987. Formation of a National Literacy Secretariat announced.

1988. Minister of Advanced Education initiates Provincial Literacy Advisory Committee. Report published 1989 makes 34 recommendations, including for regional literacy coordinators in each college region.

1990s

1990. International Literacy Year.

Literacy BC begins operations.

1991. Tuition-free policy for literacy in college system.

1992. Report on the future development of adult education in BC calls for "coordination and decentralization of programming to the community level".

1994. Joint Committee of MEd and AVED to resolve outstanding issues in funding and programming for adults.

1995. Six regions have now appointed Regional Literacy Coordinators.

1997. Raise-a-Reader begins in Vancouver. It has since raised over $4.5 million dollars in support of children's and family literacy in BC.

1998. Tuition-free ABE in the college system for those who have not completed high school.

1999. Common credential for adults in college ABE programs and adult programs in the school districts; program quality framework for use by programs in both systems as a self-evaluation tool; accountability framework for government purposes; outcomes study for graduates of the adult programs in the school districts; regional planning process with small grant incentives.

2000s

2000. Ten regions have now appointed Regional Literacy Coordinators.

2004. In the Speech from the Throne, the BC government announced its objective to become "the most literate jurisdiction in North America".

Literacy Now Communities program begins, with task groups around the province embarking on a community-wide planning process to address local literacy needs.

Premier's Advisory Panel on Literacy launched. Funding for adult literacy programs doubled.

The Province's Ready, Set, Learn initiative launches, recognizing that families need positive connections with the school system and community agencies that provide relevant resources and information.

2005. Advisory Panel submitted interim report, highlighting two key areas that the government needed to focus on: a Services Gap (lack of coordination and consistency in service delivery) and a Knowing-Doing Gap (government aware through extensive research about what needs to be done but isn't following through on making these changes happen).

2005. MEd given lead responsibility to coordinate literacy. AVED given lead responsibility for adult literacy.

BC Legislative Assembly Select Standing Committee on Education formed to address the challenge of adult literacy in the province.

The Council of the Federation Literacy Award is inaugurated to acknowledge outstanding achievement, innovative practice and excellence in literacy.

2006. Reports of Advisory Panel on Literacy and Select Standing Committee. Strategic framework (provincial strategy and action plan) accepted by government. In developing the framework, MEd looked for changes to the School Act to update the planning and reporting processes at school districts; outlined British Columbia's strategy for literacy; and provided targets and an action plan for literacy.

StrongStart centres begin to offer play-based early learning opportunities for pre-schoolers and to demonstrate for their parents and caregivers how they can help their children develop.

2007. Launch of ReadNow Action Plan, government's comprehensive literacy strategy.

Launch of the District Literacy Planning process to discharge new responsibilities of Education Boards for community lifelong literacy development.

Announcement of tuition-free ABE in colleges, school districts and online, regardless of whether the learner has completed high school.

2008. Office of the Auditor General of BC report on literacy. Main conclusions: more needs to be done to encourage potential literacy learners to take advantage of services; strategic framework should be better supported with data, cost information, funding options and detailed implementation plans; monitoring and performance reporting should be improved so progress can be tracked; infrastructure of support recommended.

2008. AVED announces more than $1.6 million for regional literacy co-ordination, creating stable full time positions, supported by colleges, and embedded in every region.

AVED becomes Ministry of Advanced Education and Labour Market Development (ALMD).

Sources: Thomas (2004); Office of the Attorney General of BC (2008)

Characteristics of Adult Learners

Adult learners have characteristics that set them apart from younger learners. They bring a variety of experiences, both in terms of their working life and educational backgrounds. This impacts on how and why they participate. While each has individual learning needs, there are some broad characteristics that are common to adult learners.

According to Knowles et al (2005), as a person matures:

- **self concept** moves from one of being a dependent personality toward one of being self-directed
- a reservoir of **experience** accumulates that becomes an increasing resource for learning
- **readiness to learn** becomes oriented increasingly to the developmental tasks of social roles, time perspective changes from postponed to immediate application of knowledge, and accordingly ...
- **orientation toward learning** shifts from one of subject-centeredness to one of problem-centredness
- the **motivation to learn** becomes internal

Adults have accumulated life experiences. They come to courses with experiences and knowledge in diverse areas. They tend to favour practical learning activities that enable them to draw on prior skills and knowledge. Adults are realistic and have insights about what is likely to work and what is not. They are readily able to relate new facts to past experiences and enjoy having their talents and knowledge explored in a teaching situation.

Adults have established opinions, values and beliefs, built up over time and arrived at through their experience of families, relationships, work, community, politics, etc. These cannot be dismissed and must be respected.

Adults are intrinsically motivated. Learners increase their effort when motivated by a need, interest, or desire to learn. They are also motivated by the relevance of the material, and learn better when it is related to their own needs and interests. To be fully engaged, their attention must be fully focused on the material presented.

Adults learn at various rates and in different ways according to their intellectual ability, educational level, personality and cognitive learning styles. Teaching strategies must anticipate and accommodate differing comprehension rates and physical abilities.

Adults learn best in a democratic, participatory and collaborative environment. They need to be actively involved in determining how and what they will learn, and need active, not passive, learning experiences.

Adults are mature people and prefer to be treated as such. Being 'lectured at' causes resentment.

Adapted from Wynne (2005)

Characteristics of Adult Learners

"I will continue to climb this mountain until I have successfully reached my potential. Thank you for recognising my efforts"

Adults are goal/relevancy oriented. They need to know why they are learning something. Their needs are concrete and immediate. They can be impatient with long discussions on theory and like to see it applied to practical problems. They are task/problem-centred rather than subject-centred.

Adults are autonomous and self-directed. They are self-reliant learners and prefer to work at their own pace. Individuals learn best when they are ready to learn and have identified their own learning needs. When directed by someone else to attend a course, e.g. an employer, adults may not be ready to learn or may not see the value in participation.

Adults are practical and problem-solvers. They are more impatient in the pursuit of learning objectives, and less tolerant of work that does not have immediate and direct application to their objectives. Problem-based learning exercises are welcomed as they build on prior experience and provide opportunity for practical application of materials/theories covered.

I am amazed at how far I have come in such a short time. I have learned so much and I have grown even more because of literacy. But most of all it's how much my dreams for myself have changed. Now I dare to dream of things I never dared before…"

Adults are sometimes tired when they attend classes. Many are juggling classes with work and family. They appreciate varied teaching methods that add interest and a sense of liveliness to the class.

Adults may have logistical considerations, including family and caring responsibilities, careers, social commitments, time, money, schedules and transportation.

Ageing concerns. Adults frequently worry about being the oldest person in a class. Creating an environment where all participants feel they have a valuable contribution can allay such concerns.

Adults may have insufficient confidence. They come to class with varying levels of self-esteem. Some may have had poor prior experiences of education, leading to feelings of inadequacy and fear of study and failure.

"I found a new way to learn that changed my frustration and anger into feelings of success – I could do it."

"The changes in my life are many but the most important is having direction. Something to focus on besides alcohol, which gives me hope for a better future for my son and I ... Now I'm writing my college entrance exams and hoping to be accepted into the Fisheries Field Technician Program."

What Adult Learners Seek

Adult learners have hopes and dreams for themselves and their children which seem less achievable because of their difficulty with reading and writing. Many identify poverty, family obligations, abuse, learning disabilities, and not getting the help they need as barriers to learning. They want the opportunity to take control of and responsibility for their education.

Adult learners want better literacy skills ...

> "If you can't read you have to be fully engaged and aware all the time! People with literacy problems have had to find other ways to cope everyday; it's a type of genius."

... to use at home – read to their children or help with homework, read labels, safely give or take medicine, read recipes, understand warranties, follow instructions and read manuals to perform other household tasks.

... to use at work – get and keep jobs, improve safety, increase upward mobility, communicate ideas and concerns and improve relations with colleagues.

... to use in the community – read bus or train schedules, talk comfortably with doctors, shop economically, do banking without help, attend local events and use the library effectively.

... to use as involved citizens – read the newspaper, decide how to vote, take part on boards and committees, speak out on matters affecting their children and themselves, understand legal information and their rights as parents, tenants, and citizens.

What adult learners say they need

> "People confuse literacy with intelligence. We need to show that there are different kinds of smarts ('street' or 'people smarts', not just 'book smarts')."

- supports that enable them to return to and stay at school (childcare, training and book allowances, transportation)
- more relevant literacy and training programs, and better access to them
- effective job training that recognizes real job skills and that leads to long-term work
- access to jobs they can do regardless of literacy level (with oral or hands-on testing instead of written tests)
- basic computer skills, to keep up with the demands of today's society
- formal recognition that 'literacy is a right' and is essential to full participation in Canadian society

Public images

Learners express concern about some of the ways they are portrayed in the media. They want images that are true to the way they see themselves. Learners want the world to see them as unique individuals with different goals and dreams, apart from their shared literacy needs. They stress the importance of highlighting the gains they can make when supported in returning to school. If you are responsible for portraying learners in any type of publication, their best advice is to emphasize the positive. Adult learners should be portrayed as:

- life long learners with skills and strengths they are building on
- parents involved in their children's education
- workers who want to improve their skills
- activists on behalf of literacy and other issues in their communities
- voters and taxpayers
- active in pursuit of their goals
- competent to succeed in life

Survey information and quotes from Learners Advisory Network (2001)

Some Principles of Adult Education

Conditions of learning	Facilitators should ...
Learners feel the need to learn	• expose the learners to new possibilities for self-fulfillment • help the learners clarify their own aspirations for improved performance • help the learners diagnose gaps between present and desired performance
Learning environment characterized by physical comfort, mutual respect, trust and helpfulness, freedom of expression, acceptance of differences	• provide comfortable physical conditions (seating, temperature, ventilation, lighting, decoration) that are conducive to interaction (circles, small groups) • accept the learners as persons of worth and respect their feelings and ideas • build relationships of mutual trust and helpfulness with and among learners by encouraging cooperative activities, refraining from competitiveness and judgmentalness.
Learners perceive goals of learning to be their own	• expose their feelings and contribute their resources in spirit of mutual inquiry
Learners accept a share of the responsibility for planning and operating the learning experience	• involve the learners in a mutual process of formulating learning objectives in which the needs of the learners, facilitators, institution, subject matter and society are taken into account • shape their thinking about the options available in designing learning experiences and the selection of methods and materials and involve the learners in deciding among these options jointly
Learners participate actively in the learning process	• help the learners organize themselves (projects, teams, field projects, and so on) to share responsibility in the process of mutual inquiry • help the learners exploit their own experiences as resources for learning through such techniques as group discussion, case method, and projects
Learning process is related to and makes use of the experience of the learners	• gear the presentation of resources to the levels of experience of learners • help the learners to apply new knowledge and skills to their personal experiences and thus to make them more relevant and integrated
Learners have a sense of progress toward their goals	• involve the learners in developing mutually acceptable criteria for progress • help them develop and apply procedures for self-evaluation accordingly

Adapted from Knowles et al (2005); see also Ball (1996)

Community-Based Programming

BC is fortunate to have strong institutional provision of adult literacy through the college system and the school districts. However, learners also rely heavily on community organizations. These have deep roots across the province, and offer unique learning opportunities at a community level, often in partnership with colleges and school districts. This section describes some of the most important models and methods of community-based programming.

One to one learning and small group instruction

Each community-based program is unique – their flexibility, and responsiveness to local needs and learner interests, are a large part of the model's appeal – so it can be difficult to describe what they do in general terms. However, a small number of examples have been selected to provide a flavour of their work.

Literacy Victoria

One-to-one volunteer tutoring services for adult learners in Greater Victoria seeking help with basic reading, writing, numeracy, computer, and essential skills. All programs are free, and serve 130+ learners/tutors throughout the year. The learners range in age from 19 to 85 years, and come from a diverse cross-section of society. Particular focus is placed on programming for Aboriginals, those with special needs, and marginalized learners who may be homeless or the working poor. Partnerships with community agencies is a vital part of service delivery.

Houston Link to Learning

This program for Houston families with low literacy levels meets a need for informal learning. Activities include a community kitchen in which adults cook, teach, learn and share together; a community garden in which they learn to grow produce; café meetings to discuss current issues; parent-child drop-in programs; parenting skills workshops; learner license classes; and student-led workshops. 60 adults are typically served each year.

Carnegie Learning Centre

In partnership with Capilano College, Carnegie Community Association and the City of Vancouver, this program reaches out to the homeless, people living in single room occupancy hotels, seniors, immigrants and others with literacy barriers in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside. It develops learning spaces throughout the neighbourhood, and delivers special issues workshops (e.g. information and options for people receiving residential school compensation). It includes one-on-one tutoring, small group instruction, assessment, and recruiting and training volunteer tutors. The program works with 45 core learners and 150 other adults.

Getting On Board

The Moricetown band's Kyah Wiget Education Society works in partnership with Northwest Community College to improve literacy levels of its members and offers English and math courses in preparation for the Dogwood. This program is based on small group work and tutoring by peers and volunteer tutors, and uses Aboriginal curricula developed locally. Field trips expand horizons for the 25 participants. Elders, guest speakers and members of the community offer informal workshops and exploration of the Wet'suwet'en language.

Partner Assisted Learning

Based in Williams Lake, PAL is run by the Cariboo Chilcotin Partners for Literacy Society in partnership with Thompson Rivers University and offers free one-to-one adult literacy tutoring in the city and surrounding areas. It supports 25 adults, from non-readers to Grade 12 level, who are uncomfortable with classroom or online courses, and focuses on their individual needs. Support is also available for those with ESL challenges.

Moe the Mouse™ Speech and Language Development Program

Commissioned by the BC Aboriginal Child Care Society, this program enhances language development in children aged 3 to 5 using Aboriginal toys and stories. The activities and materials help parents and educators provide opportunities for children to practice language skills in natural settings. The activities become part of the regular early learning and childcare program curriculum, and do not require specialized clinicians or a clinical setting. The curriculum is currently used by a variety of organizations including Castlegar Neighbourhood House and Arrow Lakes Preschool.

Family Literacy

Family literacy embraces the intergenerational sharing of experiences that enhance the development of language and numeracy skills within the family. It regards the family as a learning unit. Given the diversity of families, programs and materials, the term "family literacy" can be used to mean different things by different people.

Family literacy happens naturally, at home (reading a story together, writing a letter, cooking to a recipe) or in structured programs that can be home- or centre-based (libraries, schools, family resource programs, health centres, workplaces, community centres, childcare settings).

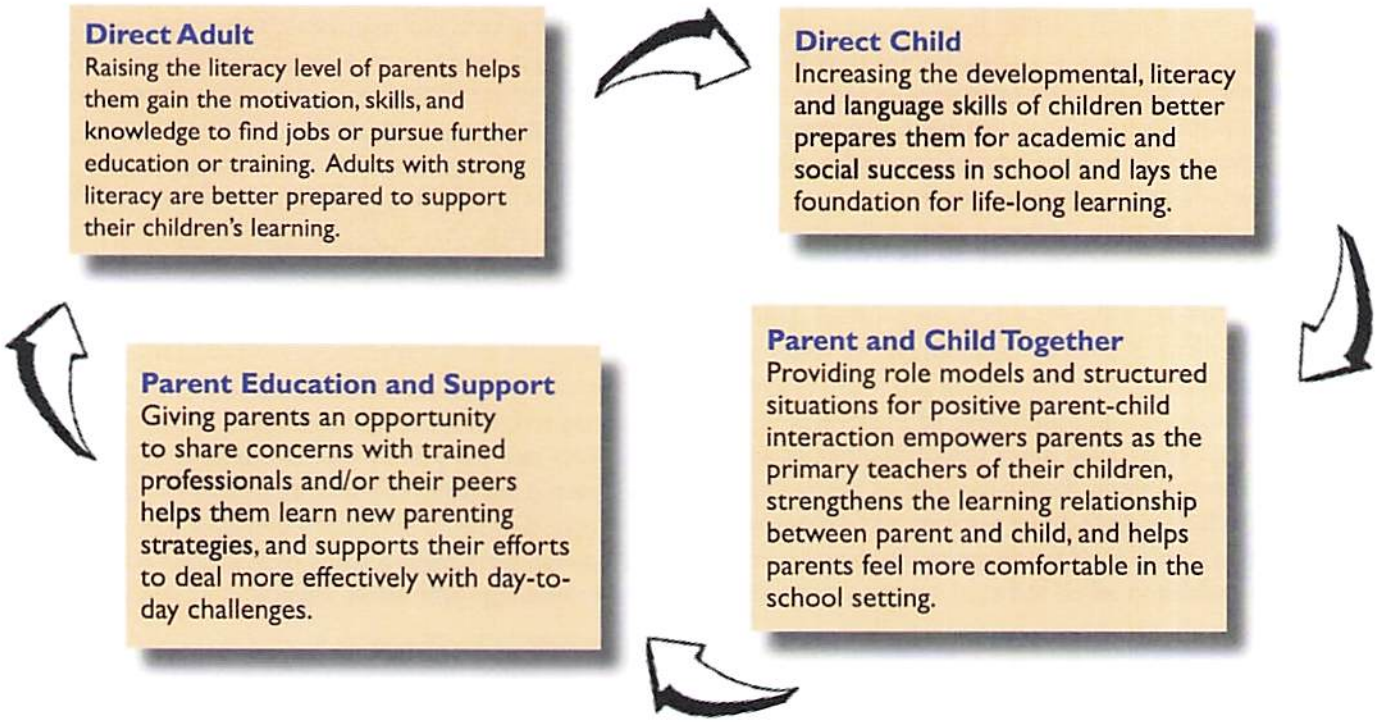
Comprehensive family literacy programs build on existing community resources and combine the strengths and expertise of many partners. They are culturally responsive, and as diverse as the communities they serve. Family literacy programs acknowledge the richness and complexity of families and the multiple, often-unrecognized literacy tasks that are part of every day life.

Children do better when parents are involved in their education. Without family engagement, interventions are less likely to be effective or lasting. But there is little point in recommending that parents read with their children and support their learning when many do not have the literacy skills to equip them for this role.

Unless we help parents as well as children develop their skills, the perpetual cycle of low literacy – and the related intergenerational correlations between education level, income, health and other critical outcomes – will persist.

Family literacy programs present a solution that builds the skills of parents and children together and offers a way to reach adults who may not be engaged by other learning opportunities.

Family literacy programs are known to be most effective when **four components** are integrated in a comprehensive service approach to intergenerational education.


Direct Adult
Raising the literacy level of parents helps them gain the motivation, skills, and knowledge to find jobs or pursue further education or training. Adults with strong literacy are better prepared to support their children's learning.
Direct Child
Increasing the developmental, literacy and language skills of children better prepares them for academic and social success in school and lays the foundation for life-long learning.
Parent and Child Together
Providing role models and structured situations for positive parent-child interaction empowers parents as the primary teachers of their children, strengthens the learning relationship between parent and child, and helps parents feel more comfortable in the school setting.
Parent Education and Support
Giving parents an opportunity to share concerns with trained professionals and/or their peers helps them learn new parenting strategies, and supports their efforts to deal more effectively with day-to-day challenges.

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Community-Based Programming

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There are hundreds of family literacy programs making a difference in British Columbian communities. A small number of examples may convey an idea of their variety:

Families in Motion Chilliwack is an intergenerational literacy program for families with serious barriers to literacy and learning. Participants meet in three different settings each week: an elementary school, a First Nations reserve, and a community-based family resource program. This provides a variety of experiences and contacts to promote engagement in community and education institutions. Parents are offered adult basic education programs and establish a personal learning plan, and parents and children learn together under the guidance of an adult facilitator and a preschool teacher.

Canucks Family Education Centre (CFEC) is an innovative partnership between Britannia Community Services Centre Society, the Canucks for Kids Fund, Literacy BC and 28 program partners. The Centre offers 5 adult focused, four component family literacy models – Get Ready 2 Read (pre-school), Partners In Education (K-3), Youth In Transition (grades 6-9), YVR Art and Literacy and the ESOL Family Literacy program – that address school-based transitions in 5 locations in the Lower Mainland and Quesnel, BC. CFEC also provides practicum opportunites for post secondary students from Langara College School of Nursing and University of British Columbia, Faculty of Dentistry.

At **Kaslo Family Centre's Parent-Child Mother Goose** program, operated by the Columbia Basin Alliance for Literacy, rhymes and songs are taught to parents and their young children. Parents gain confidence as learners and as parents, and make connections with community resources personnel and other families. Children improve language and pre-literacy skills and develop social skills while gaining in self-esteem and having fun.

Volunteers

The volunteer plays a variety of roles in program delivery – from answering phones to planning lessons and giving direct instruction to learners. Volunteers are recruited and trained by program coordinators, literacy trainers, college faculty members and or school district teachers. Colleges, school districts, NGO's and workplaces alike rely on volunteers to support their programs.

At Revelstoke Volunteer Adult Tutoring Literacy Program, between 10 and 15 adults are paired with volunteer tutors based on compatibility, interests and schedules, meeting each week to work towards completing the person's education, employment or personal goals. Also offered is small group literacy instruction at the Revelstoke Adult Centre of Learning, as well as events like computer or journaling workshops. Tutors continue to take part in training workshops throughout the year.

Community-Based Programming

English as a Second Language Settlement Assistance Program

ESLSAP provides English language training to adult immigrant and refugee newcomers in rural communities throughout BC. The program began in September 2007 after a one-year pilot phase. It is delivered through the Community Adult Literacy Program of the Ministry of Advanced Education with funding from the Ministry of the Attorney General and Citizenship and Immigration Canada.

Community-based organizations work in partnership with public post-secondary institutions to deliver one-to-one and small group ESL instruction to recent immigrants and refugees. Instruction is provided by trained volunteer tutors in the community. The goals of the program are to assist immigrants and refugees to improve their English language skills in speaking, listening, reading and writing. The program is also designed to increase their knowledge of Canadian society and their ability to participate in the life of their communities.

Selected Funding Sources

A variety of funding sources support community-based programming in BC. The following examples may be helpful.

The provincial Ministry of Advanced Education and Labour Market Development's **Community Adult Literacy Program** supports community-based program delivery. $2.4 million was disbursed to 62 projects in 2007-08. Projects must be in partnership with a public post-secondary institution. Applications are reviewed by provincial government officials. Funding recommendations are made by an advisory external review committee made up of literacy practitioners, administrators and students from public post-secondary institutions, school districts and community groups.

Visit **www.aved.gov.bc.ca/literacy/** for details.

The **Office of Literacy and Essential Skills (OLES)** is the Government of Canada's centre of expertise supporting the broad continuum of literacy and essential skills at the national level. Through its partner-based approach, OLES focuses on three areas: increasing Canada's knowledge-base on literacy and essential skills, developing effective training tools, and ensuring knowledge and tools are shared among stakeholders, partners, and the Canadian public. OLES issues regular calls for proposals from organisations seeking funding to advance these goals. Keep up to date with these at Literacy BC's website (www.literacybc.ca). To find out more about the requirements for proposals visit:

www.hrsdc.gc.ca/en/workplaceskills/oles/kit/olescfp_kit_en.shtml

Literacy BC provides financial resources to community-based adult learning programs through the **Paul Gallagher Community Access Fund**. Programs can use the funds to support their students with short-term needs such as transport, childcare, books or other costs that would make the difference between attending and not attending their literacy/ABE program. The purpose is to reduce barriers by providing financial resources with few strings attached, in order to fill gaps that more formal funding channels do not meet. Awards of up to $1000 are granted to programs that demonstrate a need for assistance related to student access where other financial support is not available. Priority is given to programs that demonstrate the greatest need. Eligible applicants must be (or be in partnership with) a registered non-profit corporation/society/host agency, school board, or public college in British Columbia. Returning applicants must have submitted a report in order to be considered again.

For more information and to download an application form, visit **www.literacybc.ca**.

CanWest Global's **Raise-a-Reader** initiative has raised over $4.5 million in support of children's and family literacy in BC since 1997. The *Vancouver Sun* commits extensive financial, promotional and editorial support, culminating on Raise-a-Reader Day held every Fall. More than 60 family literacy programs in BC currently benefit from direct financial support. Contact Literacy BC to find out how to apply.

Coordination

Regional Literacy Coordination

British Columbia has a team of full-time Regional Literacy Coordinators (RLC's) hired by the colleges, who work to develop and implement literacy initiatives in every region of the province. The position was created in 1994 in three regions, in response to a province-wide need for regional literacy coordination. Sixteen regions now participate. RLC's perform multiple roles:

- Build networks of support at the regional level.
- Provide 'closer to home' information, resources and training to literacy programs, practitioners and communities.
- Raise awareness about literacy within community agencies.
- Provide consultation and support to literacy and ABE practitioners, community/district literacy coordinators, volunteers, learners and community members.
- Offer leadership and support to partnership development.

RLC's are involved in literacy development and promotion in numerous ways. They can:

- Connect you to the most current literacy research.
- Offer your organization expertise on literacy issues.
- Work with your community on the development of a literacy plan.
- Deliver workshops and training on literacy and learning.
- Support and promote initiatives to meet community needs.

The RLC regions

- Camosun College
- Capilano University
- Douglas College
- University of the Fraser Valley
- Kwantlen Polytechnic University
- College of New Caledonia
- Nicola Valley Institute of Technology
- Northern Lights College
- North Island College
- Northwest Community College
- Okanagan College
- Thompson Rivers University
- College of the Rockies
- Selkirk College
- Vancouver Community College
- Vancouver Island University

Find contact details for your RLC at www.literacybc.ca.

Literacy Outreach Coordination

The Ministry of Education requires that all school districts submit a District Literacy Plan by July 15 every year. This plan includes the literacy assets and potential in the community or communities that make up the geographic area that is the school district. The 2010 Legacies Now Society, in partnership with the Ministry of Education, supports the community literacy planning work that becomes a major part of the District Literacy Plan.

In order to facilitate the planning process and the implementation of actions arising from the plan, most communities have identified the need to hire someone to coordinate networks, build partnerships, and support actions. Overall goals of a literacy outreach coordinator are to facilitate, stabilize, and sustain literacy work that results from planning. Specific objectives are:

- Support District Literacy Plan development, review and implementation as this requires broad-based community participation
- Strengthen and support community literacy work as a result of broad-based planning
- Develop and strengthen partnerships and communication between organizations and agencies that have a stake in literacy and with the school district
- Mobilize community resources and support fund development
- Create awareness and understanding about literacy
- Support training and best practice for an integrated literacy delivery system
- Be part of a province-wide community of literacy practice

Statistics

*Thanks to the **International Adult Literacy and Skills Survey** (2003), we have a reasonable picture of the functional literacy skills of adults in British Columbia. IALSS provides insights into the distribution of skills by occupation, first language, employment status, and more. Literacy BC can help you interpret the wealth of data available.*

IALSS assesses skills in four domains:

- **prose literacy** – understanding and using information from texts, including news, brochures, instruction manuals.
- **document literacy** – locating and using information in formats such as job applications, payroll forms, schedules, charts.
- **numeracy** – applying arithmetic operations to numbers embedded in printed materials, in tasks such as balancing accounts.
- **problem-solving** – goal-directed understanding of problem situations and their step-by-step transformation, based on planning and reasoning.

IALSS groups scores into five levels:

- People at **Level 1** have difficulty reading and have few basic skills or strategies for decoding and working with text. Generally, they are aware that they have a literacy problem.
- People at **Level 2** have limited skills and can deal well only with material that is simple and clearly laid-out. They often do not recognise their limitations.
- People at **Level 3** can read well, though they may have problems with more complex tasks.
- People at **Levels 4 & 5** have strong literacy skills and many strategies for dealing with complex materials.

Level 3 has been validated as the proficiency level needed to fully participate and succeed in modern society.

IALSS 2003 – selected findings

40% of adults in BC – and over 35% of working-age people – perform below Level 3. 14% are at Level 1, Over 44% have low numeracy. The number below Level 3 increased by 100,000 in the decade to 2003 (although the proportion did not increase).

BC's literacy profile is stronger than the Canadian average, but scores among the youngest adults (16 to 25), are lower than the average. 12% of this cohort have difficulty with even the most basic written materials.

While roughly equal proportions of men and women are at Level 1, men are over-represented (60-40) at Level 2.

Over 70% of seniors have low literacy.

60% of urban Aboriginal people have low literacy.

Immigrants with a first language other than English have lower literacy (60% below Level 3). Two-thirds of BC's working-age people at Level 1 are immigrants.

45% of those at Level 1 and 28% of those at Level 2 have less than high school education.

47% of BC adults with the weakest literacy skills, but over 80% of those with the strongest, are employed.

47% of Level 1 individuals live in low income households, compared to just 8% of those at Levels 4 and 5.

75% of those with high literacy, but only 30% of those with low literacy, rate themselves as in excellent/very good health.

Only 20% of BC adults with low literacy participate in adult education or training in a given year, compared to 75% of those at the highest levels.

Sources: Statistics Canada (1998, 2005)

Barriers

Despite the quality and variety of programs, and our best outreach efforts, many potential learners do not enroll, or once enrolled, leave before they have achieved their learning goals. The reasons are unique to each learner, but can be understood in terms of barriers to participation. Several studies have clarified common barriers:

- A wide variety of socio-economic barriers may include family and work-related responsibilities, financial constraints, daycare, transportation and health.
- Personal barriers such as learners' values, perceptions, attitudes and past experiences.
- Low self-confidence, a previous negative school experience and perceived risks associated with attending a program.
- Waiting lists, unhelpful contacts, lack of access to existing agencies, poor agency environments and lack of information about literacy services.
- If jobs are not readily available, as is often the case in rural areas, the motivation to train may be reduced.
- Sometimes adults just do not see the need for literacy training. They do not have an awareness of the benefits of upgrading. Their lives may be full and busy and they have been getting along just fine in life as things are.

Mitigating employment barriers

Many potential learners are employed or seeking employment. We need to ensure that programs are flexible and accommodate the working lives of participants.

- Ensure promotional and learning materials meet the needs of working adults.
- For those who are employed, consider establishing workplace education programs so they can work and learn in a "one-stop-shop", alleviating the need for childcare and additional transportation costs.
- Examine how and if program providers actively link with employment counseling and training services in communities.

Mitigating financial barriers

Literacy providers must show sensitivity to adult learners' financial circumstances. They can do this by:

- Reminding people that adult upgrading programs in BC are tuition free.
- Providing financial training/support to help offset the costs of travel, childcare and/or learning materials (e.g. Adult Basic Education Student Assistance Program).
- Creating flexible, adaptable programs so people can continue to work (or look for work) while participating.
- Providing affordable, good quality childcare on site.

Mitigating program/policy issues

Less than half of those who contact a literacy organization actually enroll in a program. Forty-three percent of those who do not enroll cite program/policy related issues. Not being called back, long waiting lists, inconvenient course times, wrong content or teaching structure and unhelpful program contact are the major reasons cited.

We need to consider that we may be alienating some people at initial contact. Literacy programs need to carefully consider and evaluate their intake procedures, policies and program content.

Sources: Long (2000); Literacy Basics online resource; Myers (2006)

Recruitment

Roussy and Hart (2002) recommend several strategies for recruiting adult learners as literacy program participants.

It is critical to make the first experience positive

When students come to the program, make sure their first meeting with staff and other students is warm and welcoming.

- Return calls as soon as possible.
- Give new learners a tour and introduce them to instructors, tutors and other students.
- Ensure that everyone learners meet is friendly and helpful.
- Ask already enrolled students to help orient new students.

It is important to promote your program to the family and friends of potential learners

They are often the ones who suggest that a person go to a literacy program, and their encouragement is often instrumental in an adult's decision to enroll.

- Create brochures, pamphlets and public service announcements that reach out to the families and friends of adults with low literacy skills.
- Deliver presentations about the idea that "someone you know" might benefit from literacy training.
- Talk to the public and be sure to explain how families and friends can support people who need literacy training.

Promote the program by helping to build self-esteem

Literacy agencies can help people feel better about themselves by advertising their services with a "Yes You Can!" message.

- Radio and newspaper advertisements and public service announcements with a "Yes You Can" message.
- Posters and brochures with a "Yes You Can" message, especially ones designed by learners.
- Public speaking engagements where learners talk about how they succeeded.

Ask successful learners to promote your program

Learners can give speeches, organize special events and talk about how helpful the program was in broadcast ads and interviews. They can meet new learners and show them around the program, or form a peer welcoming committee.

Long (2000) made several recommendations to reduce some of the barriers to learner recruitment.

- Use images and concepts that dispel the myth that adult learning is similar to early schooling. Show that the classroom might be as simple as a group of people sitting around a table or a student/tutor pair working together.
- Explain exactly what small groups, tutoring and classes are like, who the learners and teachers are, and what kinds of materials are used.
- Highlight the variety of programming options available.
- Make it clear that most programs do not mix adults with children or teenagers.
- Clearly explain that literacy instructors and tutors have a great deal of sensitivity in dealing with adults who have been away from the classroom for a long time.
- Reinforce the understanding that upgrading is for adults of all ages.
- Clearly show that your program is learner-centered and that adults have much more control over their learning environment than they did as children.
- Demonstrate that adults do not have to pick up their schooling where they left off. Highlight that programs are learner-centered, and learners decide what it is they want to achieve.
- Highlight that programs are of differing lengths and that people can work at their own pace. This doesn't mean that programs run indefinitely, but rather that learners will set-up a learning timeline best suited to their needs and to program requirements.
- Present upgrading as an important step in providing opportunities to achieve their dreams.

Retention

Why do adult learners often leave before completing literacy programs? Roussy and Hart (2002) found many different reasons (see box on right; respondents could cite more than one reason).

Some spoke of busy schedules at work or home that conflicted with attendance. Others had money or health problems, or lacked confidence to continue. Overall, people stopped going to literacy programs because "something else in their everyday lives was more important than going to school at that time."

This research indicates that literacy learners face significant challenges when returning to school that may be outside of their control, and that are often beyond the control of literacy agencies.

Long & Middleton (2001) found that 88% of students reported high degrees of satisfaction with program level, content, and teaching structures. However, some areas for improvement were identified, which could guide the design of programs to help recruit and retain adult learners:

- more hours per week with instructor/tutor
- smaller classes
- more individual attention
- more relevant material
- more knowledgeable teachers and tutors
- more diverse locations

Reasons for dropping out

- Work conflicts (39%)
- Money problems (39%)
- Personal problems, health, confidence (26%)
- Other problems with program (22%)
- Childcare conflict (13%)
- Other time conflict (13%)
- Other reasons (9%)
- Curriculum not relevant/wrong level (4.5%)
- Disliked teachers and/or students (4.5%)
- Family, others not supportive (4.5%)
- Staff not supportive (0%)

Vancouver's WISH Drop-In Centre Society offers a safe haven for street involved women sex trade workers. Women can work on their literacy skills in the WISH Learning Centre, operated in partnership with Capilano College. Instructors use adult learning techniques to encourage participation through the use of different media, and open discussion groups with a focus on expression through creative activities. Alderson & Twiss (2003) described the difficulties "getting women in the door" and the factors competing with their desire to attend the learning centre, such as:

- Needing to make money
- Needing to sleep
- Needing to use drugs
- Juggling boyfriends' agendas

They also reflected on their retention strategy:

"[W]e realized that the approach we had developed together was working. This approach was a combination of non-threatening but interesting 'in the door' activities with opportunities to learn new skills and participate in collective decision-making. We worked hard to make the learning experience relaxing, fun, and enjoyable while also challenging and meaningful.

For those women who live on the streets or in single hotel rooms, having a space that is calm and inviting is paramount for their reflection and healing. According to the women, the Learning Centre is:

- A place where we can relax and feel safe.
- A place where we can relax and learn at our own pace.
- A place where we can learn reading, writing, arithmetic, creative writing, computer skills, [and] function as part of a group to help others learn to be sociable.
- A place where we can talk and share our own opinions and fantasies."

ABC's of Retention

Identify **"at-risk" learners** and implement supports during intake. Relay concerns to instructors or tutors.

Build on learner strengths. Success leads to success! Start with what learners already know and go from there. Point out when learners make progress and encourage them to continue. Encourage learners to let you know when they use their new skills in everyday life or on the job.

Hold a **celebration of learner progress** and invite current and past students and their families and friends.

Have a prominent **display** of the various successes experienced by learners (learning and personal).

Early success. Ensure that adults experience success early on in the learning process to build confidence.

When appropriate and feasible, offer **field trips** related to the needs and interests of the learners. For example, visit an employment resource centre or community college, or go for a hike in the woods.

Give small, inexpensive **gifts** to learners to recognize excellent attendance or achievements.

Hold a **holiday get-together event** for current and past learners. This helps them to informally bond with each other and with staff and volunteers. Those who have dropped out may return for an informal event and this may help to re-engage them in learning.

Learners can use the **internet** to practise basic computer skills and find information. There is something for everyone online, whether their goal is independence, further education/training or employment.

Many adult learners are motivated to come to literacy programs to get or keep **jobs**. In order to serve them, ensure that your program offers instruction and learning materials and resources related to employment.

Know other community services. Literacy agencies cannot meet all of the needs of adult students. Practitioners need to know what other supports and services are available.

Display learner activities at your local **library**.

Use a **mentoring** or buddy system for orientation, homework and support needs.

Newsletters researched, written, designed and circulated by learners will help to increase skills, confidence and knowledge as well as build community.

Provide an in-depth **orientation** process so that learners get a clear understanding of the program, what is expected of them and what it takes to succeed.

Make a scrapbook of **photos** celebrating successes.

Quality instruction, relevant learning materials and overall programming that meets the needs, motivations and goals of learners are key retention tool.s

Set up a **retention team** made of learners, staff and volunteers to discuss and act upon retention issues. This will help ensure that a stronger, more intentional focus is put on retention, and help you continually follow a fresh and student-centred approach.

Put up a learner **suggestion box** in a prominent place so students can give you quick and easy (and if desired anonymous) feedback.

Training. Provide professional development opportunities for tutors and instructors on effective strategies for learner retention, and on issues that support retention such as enhanced teaching techniques, effective use of materials, multiple intelligences and learning disabilities.

Be aware of the **unique needs** of each learner. Given the complex and demanding lives led by adults, a "one size fits all" approach does not work.

Volunteers. Put time and effort into ensuring an effective match between strengths, weaknesses and interests of the adult learner and volunteer tutor.

"We miss you". Cards for learners who are often absent or have dropped out let them know they are missed.

In order to better understand and validate the different gifts and needs of adult learners, take time early on in programming to **explore individual learning styles**.

Ask learners to think about their literacy skills a **year** ago. Point out successes since. This can encourage them to persist. You can also talk about what they might be doing a year from now and how they will achieve it.

Learning **zone.** Sometimes it takes a while for adults to get comfortable with learning. The first few weeks of enrolment are critical for retention. Welcome new students to "the learning zone" and talk openly and honestly about the challenges associated with returning to school as an adult.

Adapted from *Literacy Basics* online resources

Celebrating Success

Adult learners need to know they are making progress. They have busy, demanding lives and they need to know that the time and effort they are investing in literacy is paying off. Otherwise, why should they stay?

Recognising and celebrating successes

In order to encourage learners right from the start, practitioners should build in opportunities to experience success early on in the learning process. Setting short-term, realistic, manageable goals can help learners to see progress in a relatively short period of time. Ongoing encouragement, support and reinforcement with regards to progress will greatly assist with retention.

Practitioners should continually review goals with learners and acknowledge and celebrate progress on an ongoing basis. They should also work with students to revise their goals as needed.

Roussy and Hart (2002) recommend the following steps to help learners make progress:

> "Learners, particularly those at the lowest literacy level, need to feel that they are progressing towards their goals. By setting small, specific success indicators, they will be able to see their progress on a regular basis. Training plans should outline specific skills that learners can work on, and demonstrations of progress, both formal and informal, should be a regular part of the learning program. Each lesson plan should give learners and tutors an opportunity to review the progress that has been made not only during the lesson, but also over time."
>
> from *Literacy Basics*

- Create individualized learning to ensure learners are getting what they want
- Discuss and make plans to support new learners on an ongoing basis
- Develop a strong communication strategy with each learner to help avoid dropout
- Build the sense of community that is essential to learner retention

Progress can be celebrated and recognized in many ways. Both formal and informal recognition is important. For example, it is very easy to make certificates of achievement. These can be awarded when learners reach their goals, but they can also be awarded along the way as new skills are mastered or when a particular accomplishment is noticed.

You can reward or acknowledge progress in small, less formal ways too. Telling a learner that you noticed an improvement in his or her literacy skills might just make their day. If your agency has a newsletter, you can document learner achievements there.

Demonstrations, Portfolios and Self-Assessment

Demonstrations are an effective way for learners to show that they have mastered the skills required for their stated goals and that they are making progress.

Portfolios provide a way of gathering and organizing examples of learners' work to demonstrate progress. They are not simply a binder or a box full of everything the learner has done. Rather, they are a carefully chosen selection of examples of the skills the learner has mastered over time. This includes samples of actual work the learner has completed along with assessments and any other relevant material.

Learners should be encouraged to reflect on their own progress by engaging in self-assessment. They should be encouraged to identify and document their own progress, skills, abilities and achievements. Questions like "what made it easy or hard to learn today?" or "how have you used your new skills in the past week?" can help students reflect on their progress and identify areas of difficulty and achievement.

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Further Reading

The following are examples of the useful research and reports available on various aspects of literacy. Literacy BC's Provincial Literacy Resource Centre offers free access to a wide range of print, audio-visual and online materials.

Aboriginal Literacy

Redefining How Success Is Measured in First Nations, Inuit and Métis Learning. (2007) Ottawa: Canadian Council on Learning.

The Canadian Council on Learning and its Aboriginal Learning Knowledge Centre, in partnership with Aboriginal organizations in Canada, have developed an innovative approach to measuring Aboriginal learning. Using modern communications technology to present Aboriginal perspectives, this partnership has resulted in three interactive, online learning models that convey how learning occurs throughout all stages of life and in many settings, such as the home, on the land, and in the community. Visit http://www.ccl-cca.ca/CCL/Reports/RedefiningSuccessInAboriginalLearning/

ESL Literacy

Creating a Bridge: A Snapshot of ESL Literacy in Ontario. (2006) Toronto: Ontario Literacy Coalition.

The aim of this ESL literacy study was to examine the literacy issues and challenges faced by a specific immigrant group defined by education and language. They were adult immigrant Canadians in Ontario, newcomers or settled, whose first language was not French or English and who had limited or no literacy skills in their first language. The study focused on the ESL training community in Ontario in relation to those who were studying to become literate in ESL with limited or no literacy in their first language. Visit http://www.nald.ca/library/research/bridge/bridge.pdf

Health Literacy

A Vision for a Health Literate Canada: Report of the Expert Panel on Health Literacy. (2008) Ottawa: Canadian Public Health Association.

This paper reports on the scope of the problem of health literacy. It presents a vision of health literacy and describes the barriers to attaining this vision, assesses the effectiveness of existing interventions and promising approaches, and calls for changes. Visit: http://www.cpha.ca/uploads/portals/h-l/execsum_e.pdf

Seniors Literacy

Nova Scotia Seniors for Literacy Project. (2001) Halifax: Nova Scotia Senior Citizens' Secretariat.

This project was started as a response to the findings of the International Adult Literacy Survey of 1995, which found that approximately 80% of older Canadians did not have the basic literacy skills to meet the demands of everyday life. The goal was to prepare a strategic plan to guide the development of programs, services, and projects that are best able to address the literacy needs of seniors in Nova Scotia. 21 recommendations emerged, relating to the development of community-based literacy programs for seniors. Visit www.nald.ca/library/research/nova/Nova.pdf

Workplace Literacy

Unlocking Canada's Potential: The State of Workplace and Adult Learning in Canada. (2007) Ottawa: Canadian Council on Learning.

Employer demand is increasing for employees with transferable and adaptable skills, and technological skills, barriers to training (including time and financial limitations, lack of recognition of prior learning, low levels of interest and lack of clarity about expected outcomes) are not being addressed. The report shows that adults

who learn and upgrade their skills enjoy many benefits, from improved job prospects to increasing the likelihood that their children will succeed in learning. However, it also notes that while much attention is focused on the one-third of employees who receive training, there is little understanding of those who do not participate. The report ends with recommendations for improving Canada's performance in terms of workplace training. Visit http://www.ccl-cca.ca/CCL/Reports/StateofLearning/UnlockingCanadasPotential.htm

Youth Literacy

Keeping Kids in School: The National Youth Literacy Demonstration Project. (2006) Vancouver: Literacy BC.

For three years, Literacy BC and School District 36 (Surrey) operated a demonstration classroom for at-risk youth aged 15 to 16 with significant literacy difficulties. The youth had either dropped out of school or were highly likely to do so because of low attendance, behavioural issues, and failure to complete previous grades. The program was remarkably successful. Students stayed in school, developed necessary skills, and moved back into traditional and alternative high school classes with a high likelihood of graduating. Visit http://www.youthliteracy.ca

General

Adult Opportunities Action Plan. (2007) Victoria: Ministry of Advanced Education.

Outline of a strategy for ensuring that British Columbia meets its target of becoming the best educated, most literate jurisdiction on the continent. AVED's goals included: reduced barriers and increased participation, improved literacy rates for key populations, and coordinated, quality programs that produce results. Visit http://www.aved.gov.bc.ca/adulteducation/adult_opportunities_plan07.pdf

2008 Composite Learning Index: Measuring Canada's Progress in Lifelong Learning. (2008) Ottawa: Canadian Council on Learning.

The Composite Learning Index is the first index of its kind in the world, providing an annual measure of Canada's performance in a number of areas related to lifelong learning. The CLI groups its learning indicators into four broad pillars: learning to know, learning to do, learning to live together and learning to be. Visit http://www.ccl-cca.ca/CCL/Reports/CLI?Language=EN

Literacy: Creating the Conditions for Reading and Writing Success. (2008) Victoria: Office of the Auditor General.

The Auditor-General reviewed progress towards the government's literacy goals, and concluded that the government has demonstrated leadership in developing a province-wide strategy but that more could be done to reach out to potential literacy learners, and that better support through data and funding is needed, as well as improved monitoring and performance reporting. The report noted that the expanded mandate of boards of education will bring improved coordination of literacy efforts at the community level. Visit http://bcauditor.com/PUBS/2007_08/Report6/Report%206%20Literacy%20WEB%20rev.pdf

Building on our Competencies: Canadian Results of the International Adult Literacy and Skills Survey. (2003) Ottawa: Statistics Canada.

This report presents the results of the 2003 International Adult Literacy and Skills Survey that measured the proficiencies in literacy, numeracy and problem solving of the Canadian population. It shows the skills distributions of the population of province and territory, and of specific subpopulations, such as immigrants, Aboriginal peoples and minority language groups. The report also analyses the relationships between socio-demographic characteristics, such as age, education, type of work and income, and performance in literacy, numeracy and problem solving. Visit http://www.nald.ca/fulltext/booc/booc.pdf

Useful Resources

ABC CANADA Literacy Foundation specializes in public awareness campaigns and provides promotional support to local literacy groups. *www.abc-canada.org*

The **Adult Basic Education Association of BC** is a professional association for literacy and ABE practitioners in college, school district and community-based programs. *www.abeabc.ca*

The BC Literacy Directory is a comprehensive, easy-to-use database of literacy learning opportunities acorss BC, where you can find out what other communities provide and keep your data up-to-date for referral purposes. *http://directory.literacybc.ca*

The BC Literacy Forum showcases initiatives and practices from across Canada, as well as providing conferencing and networking facilities. *www.bcliteracyforum.ca*

The **Canadian Council on Learning** is an independent, non-profit corporation that promotes and supports research to improve all aspects of learning across the country. *www.ccl-cca.ca*

ECHO Assessment System is CCL's forthcoming online assessment tool that will allow users to create, store and share information, surveys and. assessments. *http://echo.ccl-cca.ca/*

Éducacentre provides literacy programming for francophone British Columbians. *www.educacentre.com*

Exemplary Literacy Materials Online is a place to find and review adult and family literacy resources. *www.elmoreviews.ca*

Literacies is a journal and web site for adult literacy researchers and practitioners. *www.literacyjournal.ca*

Literacy Basics is a free, self-directed online training site for literacy practitioners. Its focus is Ontario, but it is broadly applicable and useful. *www.nald.ca/literacybasics*

Literacy BC is a not-for-profit provincial organization promoting and supporting literacy and lifelong learning. Among our many services is the **Provincial Literacy Resource Centre**, a large collection of free-to-borrow materials to support literacy instruction and research. *www.literacybc.ca*

Literacy Now is a 2010 Legacies Now initiative. The Literacy Now Communities program guides communities through a planning process to identify local literacy needs. A planning process focuses on building partnerships, networking and sharing best practices within BC's communities and regions.
www.2010legaciesnow.com/literacy_now_communities

BC's **Ministry of Education** leads the government's ReadNow BC Literacy Action Plan. It oversees 60 school districts, each of which has been instructed to produce a yearly Literacy Plan in partnership with the communities they serve.
www.gov.bc.ca/themes/education_literacy.html

BC's **Ministry of Advanced Education and Labour Market Development** administers the Community Adult Literacy Program, as well as the ESLSAP in partnership with the Ministry of Attorney General. *www.aved.gov.bc.ca/literacy*

The **Movement for Canadian Literacy** promotes literacy through networking, research, government liaison, learner development, communication, and capacity to support those involved with adult literacy. *www.literacy.ca*

The **National Adult Literacy Database** is a comprehensive, accessible database of literacy-related materials, available for download. It also functions as a portal to adult literacy resources and services across Canada and internationally. *www.nald.ca*

National Indigenous Literacy Association serves as the voice of Aboriginal literacy in Canada, and reflects the values of Aboriginal peoples. It supports the development of holistic approaches to literacy education and partnerships and links with quality Indigenous education initiatives. *www.nila.ca*

The Government of Canada's **Office of Literacy and Essential Skills** is a branch of Human Resources and Social Development Canada, combining the National Office of Literacy and Learning and the Essential Skills Initiative into a single cohesive program.
www.hrsdc.gc.ca/en/workplaceskills/oles/olesindex_en.shtml